

ballad has probably done more to humanize humanity than any poem ever written. In it, as G. K. Chesterton has said, "we hear a cry for common justice and brotherhood very much deeper, more democratic and more true to the real trend of the populace to-day, than anything the socialists ever uttered even in the boldest pages of Bernard Shaw."

Besides the *Ballad* Wilde wrote two letters on Prison Reform, which were published in the *Daily Chronicle*, But, from the moment he left Berneval in the late summer of 1898, his will-power seemed to desert him. He stayed with friends in Naples, Switzerland, and the south of France, talked as wonderfully as ever, but scarcely ever again put pen to paper, except to borrow money. His delight in living lost none of its keenness, and his sense of humour remained with him to the end. One day he was introduced to a lady whose talent as a writer was unfairly matched by her excessive plainness. The moment he caught sight of her he was taken aback. "Come now, Mr. Wilde," she said; "confess that I am the ugliest woman in France." Wilde bowed low and courteously replied: "In the world, madame, in the world." Another day he was being bored by a gentleman whose works did not, in his own opinion, receive the praise that was due to them. "There *s a conspiracy against me," he complained, "a conspiracy of silence; what can I do?" "Join it," Wilde advised.

He lived mostly at the H6tel d'Alsace in the Rue des Beaux-arts, Paris, and here, on 30 November, 1900, he died. Though due to meningitis, his death was considerably hastened by the brutal treatment he had received in prison.

"I am dying beyond my means," he declared when the end was in sight. And though it is true he left a few personal debts, readers of this volume will agree that he more than balanced his account with humanity.

HESKETH

PEARSON.

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